



State Senator Tupac A. Hunter

*Serving the 5th District Constituents in
Detroit, Dearborn Heights & Inkster*

Hunter Legislation Update Report



How to Contact Me

State Senator
Tupac A. Hunter

Lansing Office

915 Farnum Building
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536
Toll-Free: 866-262-7305
Phone: 517-373-0994
Fax: 517-373-5981

E-Mail

SenTAHunter@
senate.michigan.gov

Website

www.senate.mi.gov/hunter



MICHIGAN STATE SENATE
TUPAC A. HUNTER
STATE SENATOR • 5TH DISTRICT

As I look toward the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, please remember that the health, safety, and well-being of the people I represent is my first priority. I will continue my efforts to see that programs benefiting our neighborhoods and families continue to receive state support. Even in lean times, we still must take care of our citizens and provide necessary services.

This newsletter is intended to provide you with up-to-date information on the legislation that I am currently supporting on your behalf. I am focusing on legislation that would provide educational opportunities for our children, mandating health care coverage for children with autism, and bringing needed reform to child care reporting guidelines within the Department of Human Services.

I am reminded daily of the work yet to be done. Also, I remain motivated and encouraged by your support as I continue to work to protect the health, safety, and quality of life for my constituents. I hope you will continue to share your concerns and ideas as we work together to bring Michigan forward.

As always, please feel free to contact my Lansing office toll-free at 1-866-262-7305 with any thoughts or questions you may have.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours,

State Senator
Tupac A. Hunter

Talk Time with Tupac

Senator Hunter has scheduled three coffee hours to give district constituents an opportunity to personally share their ideas and concerns.



Detroit: Mary's Grill, 20804 Plymouth Road

All coffee hours are held on the 1st Friday of the month from 10-11 AM.

Inkster: McDonald's, 27125 Cherry Hill Road

All coffee hours are held on the 2nd Friday of the month from 10-11 AM.

Dearborn Heights: McDonald's, 6412 North Telegraph Road

All coffee hours are held on the 3rd Friday of the month from 10-11 AM.

You are invited to attend whichever coffee hours work best for your schedule. If you are interested in joining me, please call my office toll-free at 866-262-7305 to confirm your attendance. Please be sure to leave a message if you call after hours.

New Promise Zones Could Help Wayne County Students

Governor Granholm recently signed into law measures that could help Detroit students find the money they need for a college education. The new laws allow local communities to establish Promise Zones, which will help students living in these zones with the cost of either a two-year or four-year degree.

Promise Zones are a version of a program started with private funding in Kalamazoo several years ago. That program guarantees students who graduate from Kalamazoo Public Schools free tuition at any state university or community college in Michigan.

Now the state has taken that idea and expanded it to help Michigan's financially needy students get the college education they need to improve their lives and break the cycle of poverty.

This new program allows for the creation of up to 10 Promise Zones

around the state. These new Promise Zones will be funded by capturing one-half the growth in the state education tax in that zone. This money will then support a local effort to promise a college education to students who live in that zone. Before given approval for the tax capture, the zone must show that it has the means to fund the first two years of the promise.

These new Promise Zones will be located in areas that meet or exceed the state average poverty level for families with children under 18. Based on the most recent statistics, the Detroit City School District, Dearborn City School District, and Inkster City School District are all eligible to be designated Promise Zones. To apply, local governments must hold a hearing and pass a resolution stating



that their community wants to be named a Promise Zone. This resolution is then sent to the Michigan Department of Treasury which reviews all applications on a first come, first served basis. If a community's application succeeds, then that governing body must pass another resolution establishing the zone.

We know that in this very challenging economy, it takes either a two- or four-year college degree to get many of the jobs that are available now. This will be the case in the future as more "green" jobs are created as we transition to cleaner energy. These new Promise Zones can be a way into these jobs for students who otherwise may not have had a chance to get a college education and take part in the new economy that will soon grow here in Michigan and in the country.

Hunter Fights for Insurance Coverage for Autism Treatments



This year I will be reintroducing legislation to require insurance companies in Michigan to provide coverage for autism-related services. This would give children with autism access to the treatments they need without creating extreme financial difficulties for their parents. The cost of this health care crisis has forced many families into bankruptcy.

I have heard from many Michigan parents of autistic children about their struggles with medical bills and how they are often forced to choose between what is best for their child medically and what they can afford financially. Too many parents have been denied coverage for the therapy recommended by their child's doctor

because autism is listed as a "pre-existing condition" by the insurance companies.

These families are simply running out of options. Many make too much money to qualify for Medicaid, and too little to afford the treatments their child needs to live a healthy, productive life. Under the current system, insurance companies don't worry about the quality of life for these families because they don't have to. My legislation will change that.

A study published last year in Pediatrics Magazine in conjunction with World Autism Day reported that families who have a child with autism earn an average of \$6,200 less each year. This amount is usually due to lost wages associated with caring for their autistic child and does not include the cost of therapeutic treatments for autism.

Another recent study conducted by the Vista Foundation shows that the average monthly increase in premiums for policies that include coverage for autism-related services would be relatively low—as low as \$1.26 for individuals and \$3.41 for a family policy. That's an increase of

less than 1/2 of 1%. Insurance companies often argue that covering new treatments raises insurance costs for all policyholders. But this small increase would not affect the affordability of insurance for average Michigan policyholders.

Insurance companies already cover immunizations to keep our kids healthy and prevent them from contracting serious diseases down the road. My legislation simply extends coverage to children who need health care in order to have a chance at a productive and happy life. For children who suffer with autism, early treatment could be the difference between a life in which they are able to help care for themselves, and a life in which they will always rely on others to care for them.

Twenty-five states have either introduced bills to mandate some degree of coverage, or already require some degree of coverage for autism-related expenses. I believe the time has come to add Michigan to that list. With this legislation we can send a message to families across the state that all children deserve a chance at a healthy life.

Stricter Child Care Facility Guidelines Will Better Protect Children

Dropping your child off at a day care facility for the first time can be a hard task for any parent. As a parent myself, I understand the effort that goes into searching for good, affordable day care. We want the safest child care facility or home that we can find. In order to do that, families need to be provided with all the necessary information when seeking out child care providers for their children.

To ensure parents are fully informed of a day care provider’s history and to protect the safety and well-being of our children, I will be introducing legislation calling for stricter reporting requirements for a licensed child care facility. The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) takes part in on-site inspections of licensed care providers every two years. Presently, if a day care provider is cited for rule violations, that information is posted on the DHS website for only two years.

I became aware of the regulation problems when I was contacted by a constituent, whose young son had died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) while in day care. The day care provider had left her 14-year-old in charge of the boy and was cited for several other rule violations in the incident. What my constituent did not know was that in 1998, another young child had died of SIDS in the same day care home. In this circumstance, the child care provider was not found negligent in the incident that resulted in the child’s death from 1998, and the provider was cited only on rule violations. Under current law, that information was posted online for only two years, and DHS was not obligated to report the incident to my constituent when she received a list of day care providers from the department.

It should be the responsibility of DHS to directly report these

incidents, which have resulted in serious harm or death of a child, to parents in order to guarantee that families have all the facts before making a decision on a child care provider. Under my legislation, the department would be required to provide a written notice on rule violations to parents, for a ten-year period, who are either enrolled or enrolling in that day care facility.

By keeping a closer eye on what’s going on inside child care facilities and providing new reporting guidelines for DHS, we can be further assured that Michigan’s families are being provided with every piece of information they need to feel safe and secure in placing their child in the care of another individual.



Senator Hunter accepts the Legacy Hero Award from Jack Kresnak, President and CEO of Michigan’s Children. Senator Hunter was recognized for sponsoring legislation and working with others to improve the lives of Michigan’s children. Michigan’s Children is a Lansing-based advocacy group that works with lawmakers, business leaders, and communities to give all children the opportunity to thrive. Annually, for the past nine years, Michigan’s Children has honored legislators for their work for children.



Senator Hunter with fifth grade students from the Samuel B. Dixon School and their teachers, Mrs. Baskin and Mrs. Beasley, during their tour of the State Capitol on January 29, 2009.



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P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536



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Federal Stimulus Package Includes Help for Michigan Schools

Education funding would get a boost with \$163.5 million for “Education Incentive” grants, \$419.5 million for special education funding, \$24 million for school technology programs and \$3.8 million for teacher quality enhancement.

The Senate Fiscal Agency estimates that the Detroit City School District will receive the following amounts for these specific programs: Title 1 Funding: \$155,466,349.00; Special Education Funding: \$30,449,558.00; Incentive Grants Funding: \$25,383,212.00; and Stabilization Funding: \$566,105,184.00.

The Senate Fiscal Agency estimates that the Dearborn City School District will receive the following amounts for these specific programs: Title 1 Funding: \$10,376,507; Special Education Funding: \$3,925,844.00; Incentive Grants Funding: \$1,694,187.00; and Stabilization Funding: \$23,681,315.00.

The Senate Fiscal Agency estimates that the Dearborn Heights School District #7 will receive the following amounts for these specific programs: Title 1 Funding: \$448,627.00; Special Education Funding: \$673,826.00; Incentive Grants Funding: \$73,248.00; and Stabilization Funding: \$1,023,859.00.

This money should help alleviate some of the cuts to education that Governor Granholm outlined in the State Budget proposal that was released a few weeks ago. Those cuts

included a \$59 reduction per pupil in the foundation allowance, a 20 percent reduction in money for school districts that have the highest per-pupil spending, and a 20 percent reduction in funding for Intermediate School Districts. These will no longer be necessary, although state officials are still encouraging schools to budget carefully.

The stimulus plan would also create the American Opportunity Tax Credit to make college more affordable for families. This new \$2,500 partially refundable tax credit could help as many as 121,000 Michigan families. The Senate Fiscal Agency also believes that provisions of the stimulus plan for higher education funding require the state to fund universities and community colleges at the same levels they were funded at during this current budget year.

This appears to mean that the state cannot reduce university funding by 3.2 percent which was proposed in the Governor’s recent budget for 2009-2010.

To offer immediate help with college costs, Governor Granholm has also called on the state’s colleges, universities, and community colleges to freeze tuition for the 2009-2010 academic year. A tuition freeze will offer immediate help to students and their families if our colleges and universities agree to this freeze.

Thankfully, our schools will not be faced with severe budget cuts in the coming school year. While they still will have to spend carefully, they can continue to improve and offer programs to give our children the great education they need and deserve.

